



Relationships and Sexuality Education Policy

Introduction

The mission statement of Clifden Community School commits us to preparing

our pupils for adult life by learning RESPONSIBILITY, RESPECT AND PERSONAL REGARD for self and others under our banner of LUX,PAX, FELICITAS - LIGHT, PEACE AND HAPPINESS in an atmosphere that promotes positive self esteem

In our general goals we have committed ourselves to creating a safe and healthy school environment where each student can grow, feel comfortable, and establish positive relationships, which encourages tolerance, respect and understanding of other people, to providing experiences that encourage creativity and personal development. Education is about developing skills for life as well as skills for learning.

We are committed to helping each student develop a healthy self-image, effective communications skills, respect for their own life and the lives of others as a vital preparation for life. In the context of our mission and goals, we believe that the Relationships and Sexuality Education (RSE) programme is an essential part of the personal, social and religious formation of the student. In this school, it will be taught as part of a Social, Personal and Health Education programme.

Aims

The overall aim of the Relationships and Sexuality Education programme at post-primary level is to build on the primary school programme and provide young people with the information and skills to evaluate critically the wide range of information, opinions, attitudes and values offered today, in order that they will make positive, responsible choices about themselves and the way they live their lives. It aims to provide opportunities for our students to learn about relationships and sexuality in ways that help them think and act in a moral, caring and responsible way. Within this overall objective, our goals are:

- *to support the development and growth of the whole person towards becoming fully human as a unique person*
- *to enable young people develop attitudes and values towards their sexuality in a moral, spiritual and social framework*
- *to promote a positive attitude to one's own sexuality and in one's relationships with others*
- *to help young people understand and develop friendships and relationships*
- *to promote a positive understanding of sexuality and to explain the human reproductive system*
- *to support young people with help and guidance in preparing them to live their lives as members of a Christian family*

Approach

Relationships and Sexuality education in this school will

- *be developmental and be appropriate to the age and stage of the pupil - common starting levels cannot be assumed.*
- *put forward factual knowledge and encourage the exploration of facts*
- *examine opinions and concepts and encourage discussion*
- *encourage awareness, respect and responsibility for oneself and others*

Concepts such as love, joy, anger, fear, hate, trust, respect, sexual feelings and sexual responses are difficult to describe but need to be explored. Like other areas of health education, sex education is concerned not only with cognitive development but affective and moral development.

The value context in which the programme will be presented will be based on Gospel values. These values enshrine the dignity and uniqueness of each member of the school community.

Opportunities will be provided for students to discuss attitudes, beliefs, and values and to develop the skills necessary to make informed, moral decisions about their lives.

Opportunities will be provided for honest and sensitive answering of questions with an eye to individual needs and levels of awareness. The overwhelming principle must be that any questions that are asked by students are answered in a clear factual manner.

The programme, in the main, will be delivered in a co-educational class setting. Boys and girls may be split into separate groups on particular occasions for separate discussions with teachers or resource persons such as a nurse or doctor. The programme will be delivered by appropriately trained teachers as far as possible.

We recognise the importance of a whole school approach and invite the ongoing input and feedback from the entire school community. We recognise the initiatives already taken in the school, both formal and informal, as part of the general education programme in the humanities and sciences, the religious education programme in particular and the pastoral care system.

Parents

Parents, as the primary educators of their children, have a vital role to play in the programme. Parents will be kept informed about the context and approach used in any programme undertaken and used in the process of providing sex education for their children.

Parents may withdraw their children from the sex education programme. If parents wish to exercise this right, they should speak directly to the Principal. Appropriate measures will be taken to ensure their wishes are respected. It is recognised that ALL staff concerned should be made aware when a parent is exercising this right.

Cross-Curricular Programme

The particular curriculum context in which this programme will be taught in the school is the Social, Personal and Health programme within timetabled class periods.

We recognise that relationships and sexuality education is not the sole responsibility of any one area within the school. Occasionally, aspects of relationships and sexuality education will arise naturally in other subjects e.g. Geography relating to population growth, in English relating to aspects of relationships in a novel or play. Within Religious Education a range of topics will be covered with particular emphasis on Christian teaching and personal dignity. Within the Sciences, specific areas relating to human biology set out in the science programme will be dealt with. We are committed to a progressive introduction of a designated programme of study under the general auspices of Social, Personal and Health Education and within the national guidelines, adapted to the needs of this school. When sexual matters emerge in the curriculum in general the matters raised will be confined to the context of the subject area in which they arise.

RSE is also offered informally to students through a caring and supportive school atmosphere, and fostered in positive relationships between the school and the home. These priorities are reflected in other areas of school policy - discipline, bullying, attendance, pastoral care system, counselling, chaplaincy etc. We recognise the positive contributions of the relationships formed and developed with students by the staff in general and between the students and teacher within the class setting.

It is important that the programme must reflect the values of the parents and school clearly. Staff will deal with issues in a sensitive way related to these values. We believe that the approval of parents is important for the programme.

Support

It is recognised that any single textbook may be inadequate or of limited use in the context of the teaching methodologies used in the delivery of the programme. RSE classroom materials provided to the school will be maintained and used appropriately by the teacher, who may distribute some elements for students' use.

It will be the responsibility of the co-ordinator for the programme to maintain an archive of appropriate resources and materials developed within the school by staff working in the delivery of the programme or sourced from external agencies, to maintain a listing of such resources and to have them available as required by teachers providing the programme.

Requests for additional teaching resources will be handled in the standard form in use within the school.

As far as possible, classes will be set across the year group, thus enabling teachers to move according to their particular strengths in the delivery of the programmes between groups within the year group.

The role of the teacher is confined to the educational context in delivering this programme. This must be borne in mind if/when teachers and others who may be involved in the delivery of the programme are approached by students and asked for advice on sexual behaviour.

Where a student seeks personal advice on sexual behaviour, he/she will be advised to seek parental advice. If a staff member has cause for concern then he/she should highlight the risks to the student while informing the Principal or the person(s) who may be of assistance to the student. Information on the appropriate agencies for professional counselling and advice on individual issues may be provided as part of the curriculum. This means that teachers should not offer individual advice to pupils which may be/is within the area of parents or other professionals in the area. Limited support is available within the school in the counselling area from the counsellor and the school chaplain.

Resource persons in the form of doctors, nurses, social welfare officers or health workers in the community may be approached and engaged when appropriate for advice and assistance n promoting aspects of the programme. Such approaches must be cleared in advance with the school administration.

The Programme

A copy of the programmes together with its overall objectives for the three year Junior Cycle is available in the school.

This programme and our overall policy will be reviewed annually by a committee made up of two parents, two staff members and two members of the Board of Management.

This policy was reviewed and ratified by the Board of Management on November 19th 2015

Signed: _____

Date: _____

Chairperson BOM

This document has been approved as official policy by the Board of Management. The Board of Management delegate staff to use their professional judgement in the selection and delivery of material but reserve the right to inspect current programmes and materials at any time.